WHO ARE THE BUILDERS OF MODERN INDIA?

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WHAT, exactly, is the concept of "Modern India" that India herself would like to present to the world? Can anyone in India give a precise answer to this question? Is India only an "underdeveloped country" frantically trying to catch up to the Industrial Revolution, which is right now attaining its consummation in nuclear insanity? Or is she a pilgrim wending her way towards that pattern of a heaven regarding which some diehards have recently raised clouds of doubt? Emphasizing, as she has been, only the two lower *purusharthas* of *artha* and *kama*, or values of wealth and pleasure, through her five-year plans and a foreign policy of her own, what would be wrong if she is understood to be wanting to be taken as bravely materialistic and boldly neutralist? An agricultural economy depending on industrialized countries for wheat and rice, could she not be taken to be an unsure walker on the edge of mighty promises?

It is characteristic of modern times that when you speak of England, France, Germany, America, Russia, China, Africa or any other country, you cannot draw the picture with one deep colour, as was the practice with classical map-makers. You may contend that at least the Communist countries may be painted with a single deep red. Undoubtedly red will be the predominant colour in regard to painting these countries. But there will have to be different shades of red. Premier Khrushchev's recent Bucharest speech which effectively relativized Lenin's absolute position in ideational matters of Communism, and the Chinese reaction to it, would indicate that there have to be shades even in red, too. One has to remember that "left-sectarianism" has already become a heresy.

If you require different shades of red to paint the Communist countries, you undoubtedly need quite a few colours to paint the countries where democratic forms of Government prevail. The picture of a rich-happy-strong-stable-cocky-lounging America painted in thick gold is not a true one. There are grey and black, blue, green, and red in America.

Long before the U-2 incident which stirred up a lot of file-searching, there was soul-searching going on in America. This is proved by the fact that President Eisenhower had appointed a Commission on "National Goals" for studying "issues of the future." The Commission is financed by private endowments and manned by competent people from outside Government offices. Moreover, recently some leading journals in America have conducted a lively debate on "national purpose," in which some outstanding thinkers of the country participated. America appears to be searching for more comprehensive national ideals than those known to her since the days of the Pilgrim Fathers. Writing in this debate, Walter Lippmann said: "In part we have outlived our old purposes, in part they are irrelevant." And he continued: "Western freedom will not survive just because it is a noble ideal. In our age it will survive if, and I think only if, we can take freedom down with us into the hurly-burly of the conflict and prove that a free society can make itself the good society." (*Life Magazine*, June 20, 1960).

Mr. Lippmann does not appear to take it for granted that free society has already proved itself to be good society. This will show that in America, honest and acute thinking admits the necessity for democracy yet to prove and improve itself in order to become a fit instrument for the survival even of the fittest and the strongest.

If democracy has yet to prove its thesis, Communism too has very much to do the same. When ideological salesmanship is set aside for the nonce, and affairs are studied in naked reality, one must come to the conclusion that the present struggle in the world is not a battle between two proved truths but two unproved theses. And it would appear that the problems of each are enough unto itself.

But in India by choosing for ourselves the end of socialism and the means of democracy, we have adopted the inherent problems and promises of both systems. The excellences and contradictions, successes and failures, struggles and tribulations, dreams and despairs that characterize the Indian national life of today issue out of this historic fact. This great adoption of India, though a hazardous one, is not necessarily a mistake. It would be unwise today to consider it a mistake. It would appear that somehow history has chosen India to be the pivot of a crucial civilizational experiment which may have meaning for all humanity.

(II)

India is offered no other choice but to make this experiment a success, for her own good and for the good of the world. Failure would mean that India would be torn to pieces by internal contradictions and strifes. And this experiment will be made a success, not through any hybrid imitation of the opposing blocs of the world on a fifty-fifty basis, but through the development of the strength of India's own character.

All the resources that we require for the development of India into an ideal state, where no one will be in want of food, clothes, medicines, and shelter, and everyone will receive proper scope for physical, mental, and spiritual advancement, are there in India. But this most basic and significant fact can be taken advantage of only through character, which

we have not been sufficiently looking after, in post-independence days.

Independence was won in India, not so much through non-violence as through character. That was the one thing common to both Gandhian and non-Gandhian patriots, all of whom, if the truth be told, were responsible for making the nation free. And this character was rooted in a lofty emotional identification with the country, a reverential affection for the Mother. In those days, India was Mother India. And Mother India was non-different from the Divine Mother, for whose sake no sacrifice, either of property or life, was too great. Not only this, any sacrifice was a supreme fulfilment.

But what has happened to our Mother since the coming of independence in India? With the vivisection, the Mother died; she actually died. Have you ever heard people speaking of "Mother India" after the partition? And so, *"Vande mataram"* suddenly sounded incongruous. When the Mother became the "Republic," *"Jana-gana-mana"* became *the* national song. In place of a *mantram*, we had an "anthem," although constitutionally *"Vande mataram"* still has an 'equal status' with the national anthem!

Meanwhile the States constituting the Republic have become linguistic provinces, releasing some of the worst divisive tendencies in national life. The credit balance of Sardar Patel's life-work no longer looks very enduring. And the irony is that all this is happening in the name of integration.

How many Indians are there today in India?—Indians who think and feel for the whole nation with their hearts and souls, who are agonized when evil of any sort befalls any part of India; who are filled with joy and pride when something noble, great, and glorious is done anywhere in India; whose hearts and souls not only feel for all Indians but for all humanity? Very few indeed. We have Andhras, Assamese, Beharis, Bengalis, Gujaratis Hindi-speaking people, Maharastrians, Malayalis Oriyas, Panjabis, Tamilians, but alas, how few Indians! Linguism has almost wholly swallowed up the pan-Indian spirit. In America, though the different States enjoy a large measure of autonomy, it is the American national spirit that reigns everywhere supreme. A man feels himself here an American first, and then only a New Yorker or Texan. Of course this did not happen in America in a day. The growth of the spirit of Federalism in America took a good long time.

But in India we had this spirit of nationhood before Independence was won, and we have been losing it all the time since Indians began to rule India. Though all the reasons for this cannot be exhaustively catalogued here, the following three stand out as the main factors leading to the present situation:

(a) politicalization of the concept of nationhood, which has given rise to a class of career politicians;

(b) secularization of the concept of State, which with one hand has scotched communalism and with the other blasted the spiritual values of life;

(c) adoption, for the first time in Indian national history, of naked and unqualified materialism as the national goal, which has endowed selfishness in all quarters with a glow of legitimacy so as to keep the national economy geared to the begging point.

Though in all our history before January 26, 1950 we had no Constitution of India, somehow there used to be a soul of India with a spiritual content. After 1947, we sought to recast India on modern Western lines. The result is that we are fast losing our ancient moorings and have not been able to build anything enduringly new as far as our national culture is concerned. The strongest proof of this fact is to be seen in the growing cynicism of the educated younger generation, for which, to say the least, their leaders and parents share the responsibility.

If India has to make the mighty experiment she has undertaken a success, and stop some of the ominous trends in her national affairs, two things must be done above everything else in India today:

(a) to recapture the spiritual content of the nationhood by all suitable means;

(b) to make character the most enviable prize in national life.

Leaving the generation of the grown-ups to their own best lights, the greatest conceivable care should be taken to educate the younger generation in regard to the various aspects of the cultural and spiritual heritage of India. One of the ways of doing this is to publish attractive but authentic books suitable to different age-groups, beginning from the school stage and continuing up to the University stage. These should be made available at a reasonable price. In America, the publishing industry is quick to grasp the national needs and they themselves pilot projects and invite competent authors to write for these projects. And they see to it that no age-group is left without cultural and spiritual pabulum. Of course, American publishers, by and large, also know how to make their services to the nation a business proposition. There is no reason why Indian publishers should not learn to do that. If no private agency succeeds in doing this good work in an adequate measure for the nation, it devolves on the Government to do the needful.

(III)

The importance of the Indian Government's decision to publish biographical sketches of "Builders of Modern India" cannot, therefore, be exaggerated. But from an item in the "India News," dated June 1, 1960, issued by the Embassy of India in Washington, one is unable to feel sure that this valuable scheme is being properly handled. Here is the report:

> "The Government of India propose to bring out biographical sketches of thirteen eminent leaders of the country under the series, 'Builders of Modern India.' The leaders are, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, M. G. Ranade, Badruddin Tyabji, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Bepin Chandra Pal, Dr. Rabindranath Tagore, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Lala Lajpat Rai, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Pandit Motilal Nehru, Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, G. Subrahmanya Iyer, and Dr. M. A. Ansari. The list is tentative and will be expanded in due course."

Indeed, this list has to be tentative, but only as to the names of such personages as are still alive. In other regards it need not and should not be tentative. The extent of the tentativeness of the published list shows that the whole idea is still in an inchoate state in the minds of the makers of the scheme.

From the published names, it would appear that as Builders of Modern India, the Government of India would like mainly to present those all-India personages who have been associated with the political emancipation of India. This in effect would again mean putting across to the country and the world an India—held politicalized concept of modern India, where politics is the highest value and the most important force regulating all aspects of the national

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life. (Even with so faulty a concept and scheme, leaving apart names of living personages, what could one think of a list which, on the plea of tentativeness, leaves out the names of Sri Aurobindo, C. R. Das, Gandhiji, Netaji, Sardar Patel, Maulana Azad, to name but a few? And if history would be permitted to be non-doctrinaire, there would be other names of a different types of patriots to be included.) And this would be bad education, economics, and politics—a tremendously effective piece of disservice to the nation and to humanity. It would be bad education because it would make the occupancy of the Rashtrapati-bhavan almost a substitute for *moksha*, or liberation. It would be bad economics because it would disvalue other noble aspirations of life. It would be bad politics because it would make politics intolerably more important than it is.

Politics is undoubtedly a very important part of national life everywhere in the world today. A nation can ignore politics only at its peril. A man of the world of today who does not take due and intelligent interest in politics fails to discharge his duty to society. This is especially true in countries where democratic forms of Government prevail. But the politicalization of the entire concept of nationhood, which means making politics not only omnipotent but also the supreme value of national life, is a different thing altogether. This will spell not only the repudiation of India's national spiritual heritage, but also the rejection of the possibility of a glorious future for India.

The concept of nationhood we put across will determine the values we seek to cherish and hand down to our children. And those values in their turn will create thought-patterns; the thought-patterns will shape the character of the people. A politicalized concept of nationhood can have no philosophy higher than a "gospel of enlightened self-interest" and a religion no higher than economics. And this cannot build the character which India badly needs today in order to survive and succeed.

(IV)

In India we have very fast developed the tremendous illusion that once we somehow obtain a higher standard of living, all our miseries will vanish. "Give us more money, yet more money, and even more than yet more money, and we will have solved all our problems," that is India's frantic cry to the world today. We appear to think that before the high altar of economics everything must bow—our religion must bow, our philosophy must bow, our good sense, our common sense, our sense of values, and even our sense of decency and modesty. A scrutiny of our Five-Year Plans, which typify our national aspirations, will show what little concern we have in India today for values other than materialistic and hedonistic.

It is good to remember that no higher standard of living is ever going to be adequate for insatiable Man. A higher standard of living, in a capitalist society, develops a pattern of economy which thrives on creating new artificial wants in the minds of consumers. This want-creating economy is, spiritually speaking, a real man-eater,—a fact not obvious in India, but very much so in America. If American entrepreneurs cannot create new wants today, tomorrow their economy will be in dire peril. This is why advertising is one of the most important of its industries. Consumer-goods are no doubt consumed by man, but beyond a certain limit they start consuming him.

Neither is the soul-eating authoritarian economy such a wonderful heaven as it is made out to be, for the simple reason that it makes a theory more important than man. The day man becomes more important than the theory, there will be chaos in such an economy. One might say that in the Capitalist economy, man rides the tiger and in the Communist economy the tiger rides the man! The world requires today an economy which will be neither a man-eater nor a soul-eater, but will progressively enliven, ennoble, and enlighten everybody. This should be the task towards the realization of which Indian national energy, enthusiasm and genius should be bent.

In one sense, both Capitalist and Communist economies are fixed economies. They cannot change and retain their character. In India we do not have a fixed economy but a mixed economy. If this mixed economy comes to mean the conglomeration of the weaknesses of both economies and the strengths of neither, India can have no economic future. If, on the other hand, in order to have easy success for our mixed economy, we effect a cross between the "soul-eating" and "man-eating" aspects, India may very well have an economic future, but nothing higher than that, which any thinking Indian will shudder to have to anticipate.

The real issue, therefore, in India is: how to have a higher standard of living without the civilization's becoming materialistic and hedonistic. The politicalized conception of nationhood is just the thing which is making us materialistic and hedonistic. It cannot do otherwise.

Then how exactly can we make our mixed economy such a success as will not do violence to our all-comprehensive national ideals? This can be done only through remote control of the economy by the imponderables, and in no other way. *Moksha*, or liberation, is the ultimate economics of life. When the national economy is studiedly tuned to the requirements of the ultimate economics, conflicts between *preyas* and *sreyas*, pleasant and good, *abhyudaya* and *nihsreyasa*, prosperity and illumination, here and hereafter, are removed. This alone should be the philosophy underlying both the mixed economy and the foreign policy of neutralism in India. Then alone will these succeed and have a meaning for herself and humanity.

One of the most significant aspects of Gandhiji's life is that he considered all his political struggles as his personal striving for *moksha* or liberation. Though it is no longer fashionable in India to think over this aspect of Gandhiji's life, here precisely is the clue which can solve many of our national psychological dilemmas: the subordination of everything else to the supreme spiritual value of life.

Gandhiji was not at all an innovator in this regard. He, a true son of India, tried to practise the ancient wisdom of India in his life. If today, out of conceit of modernism, we reject that ancient wisdom, the problems that will arise out of our choosing the goal of socialism and means of democracy will tear us to pieces. But with the ancient wisdom of India in our possession, there is no modern problem in the world which we cannot boldly face and effectively solve. We may do everything necessary for our prosperity and advancement, for raising ourselves by our bootstraps; we may remove all maladies, fight all injustices, hunger, disease, poverty, and superstition, offer equal opportunities to all and unequal opportunities to the submerged. But all these doings will in a short while prove to be of doubtful value unless everything is done in consonance with and obedience to the supreme spiritual value of life.

This is no new idea in India: it is in the very soil and soul of the nation. But it needs to be re-

interpreted to the masses in the modern context. One of the most effective ways of doing this is to offer to the nation a comprehensive concept of nationhood as contra-distinguished from the politicalized concept.

(V)

What exactly is the comprehensive concept of Indian nationhood; and in that sense, who should be considered the builders of modern India? The Government of India, with the help of the Indian Press, will do well to elicit the answer from the outstanding thinkers of the nation. Undoubtedly differing views will be aired, but a generally acceptable idea will emerge. In any case, it will be a stimulating discussion for the whole nation, in which even the younger generation may participate with profit.

Undoubtedly India is a political entity, defined in a Constitution, occupying a geographical locus in the world. The Constitution of India defines its political character. But the Constitution cannot be equated with the nationhood. Just as the Taj Mahal is something more than a mass of stones, India's nationhood is more than its Constitution. Even before the Constitution, India's nationhood was. If this Constitution is scrapped, India's nationhood will still be. India's nationhood has grown in the process of history down milleniums. It has a character and a discipline, a meaning and a mission.

Undoubtedly India's nationhood is a political concept of the modern sort. But it is also a concept of a civilization where a section of humanity—known as India, comprising various racial stocks, professing different religions, speaking various languages,—lives in a miniature world, representing various climatic conditions, striving for the realization of a complete scheme of values of life. "Modern India" should not mean rejection of this complete scheme of values and adoption of a lop-sided one. It should only mean providing in the modern set-up the means for actualizing the complete scheme of values.

In other words, nationhood in the India of today should mean a set-up of society in which every single person is provided with due opportunities for physical, mental, and spiritual advancement for the realisation of *dharma, artha, kama,* and *moksha*. It is not that everyone will be forced to strive for the realization of all the values; but the pattern of society will be such as to encourage and facilitate the pursuit of all of them. In India it is not the pattern of society that should determine the scheme of values but the scheme of values that should determine the pattern of society. New creative leadership will emerge in India only on the basis of perfect understanding of this crucial point.

What is being sought in India today is the fulfilment of some political dreams, but not the fulfilment of the life of the individual. This is why the springs of national energy have not been adequately responsive to the call for heroic deeds. Neither Rightist obscurantism nor Leftist epicureanism will possibly do the trick in India. It is not modernization alone that is the need. India's greatest need is the resurrection of that grand national ideal which in its vast sweep embraces the body and the soul, the country and the world, time and the timeless.

Without taking note of this fact, we cannot determine who actually have been the builders of modern India. The Government of India's tentative list, headed by the name of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, would indicate that in their view, Modern India was born with the spelling of "*Vandemataram.*" But historically this is not true. Dr. B. Pattabhi Sitaramayya exercised better judgment in this regard when he wrote in *The History of the Congress* (1935):

> It was not merely the political forces and the sense of political subjection that gave birth to the Congress. The Congress doubtless had its political objectives, but it was also the organ and exponent of a movement of national renaissance. For fifty years and more before the birth of the Congress, the leaven of national rejuvenation had been at work. In fact, national life in its protein aspects was in a state of ferment so early as in the time of Raja Rammohan Roy (1776-1833) who may, in one sense, be regarded as the prophet of Indian Nationalism and the Father of modern India. (P. 17).

In any case, the list of names of the Builders of Modern India should be headed by the name of the "Father of the Modern India!" There is no reason why we should not all be agreed on this point.

Now the question arises, from the time of Raja Rammohan Roy down to our day, who are to be considered the Builders of Modern India, and why should they be considered so? The selection of these names should depend on some clear rational principle and based on historical facts. In consonance with the ideal concept of nationhod we have presented above, we suggest:

(a) that they alone should be considered the Builders of Modern India, whose lives, works, and thoughts have creatively and beneficently influenced the people of India as a whole in their pursuit of the four *purusharthas: dharma, artha, kama,* and *moksha;*
(b) that for practical purposes, in this list only such names be included as may on the basis of facts be considered all-India figures, and not the provincial figures, though these also, in their locus, may have been very important;
(c) that for obvious reasons, the names of persons still alive should not be included;
(d) that after due deliberation by a small, competent Commission, preferably composed of one Supreme Court Judge, one Vice-Chancellor, and a venerated Journalist, the entire list should be drawn up and published;
(e) that no provincial, linguistic, or zonal consideration should have anything to do with the selection, which should be made rigorously on the basis of the facts of history; and if numerous nation-builders are found to have been from any one part of the country, no one need apologize to any one for recording that fact.

If our suggestions are acceptable, the present one-sided list will have to be enlarged to include the names of those who have creatively influenced the entire nation, either in regard to pursuit of liberation or righteousness or wealth, or such legitimate pleasures of life as are unopposed to *dharma.* In such a list should be included the names of:

(1) poets and artists who chastened the sensibilities of the nation, who inspired it with new ideas, created new patterns of beauty, taught people to discover a new meaning in life;
(2) journalists who boldly and selflessly served the national cause and created a national spirit in the country;
(3) patriots and servants of the nation who made sacrifices and suffered for freeing the Motherland, and who later served the country selflessly;
(4) foreigners who adopted India as their

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motherland and placed at her feet their everything ;

(5) pioneers and investigators who introduced the study of the sciences and inculcated the spirit of research in the country, and opened the ways for the inflow of knowledge from the outside world ;

(6) path-layers for modern industry and commerce who taught the nation how to create wealth and improve the national economy ;

(7) scientists, savants and philosophers whose pursuit of knowledge for its own sake inculcated a noble habit in the country and placed it on the intellectual map of the world ;

(8) educationists who introduced various systems of education ;

(9) social reformers and altruists who fought various evils of society, worked for raising the submerged masses and improving the status and lot of women ;

(10) prophets, saints, sages, and religious leaders, who held before the nation the spiritual concept of life, helped people to move Godward, and opened the ways for sharing with the world India's invaluable spiritual heritage.

It is not our intention to furnish a list of names here. We are only suggesting the criteria for choosing the names for a comprehensive list which should be drawn up by the national Commission suggested. The Commission should not be a ponderous, expensive, and indecisive one. Its members may meet in a vacation somewhere and quietly finish the work, doing it as a service to the nation, without asking for remuneration, and costing as little as possible for meeting expenses.

When the list is made, two sets of books should be written : one for adults and the other for children. Greater care and imagination should be exercised to produce suitable and attractive books for children. Those whom the nation will recognize as nation-builders of modern India, will for all time become our national heroes, whom we will adore with heart and soul and try to emulate in our lives.

To walk in the footsteps of the true builders of modern India will be our most impregnable line of self-defence, our soundest national planning, our richest means of food-production, and our most enduring national integration. It will give us the vision we require, the power we need, the confidence we lack, and the character we have lost.

Yet in the last analysis, the builders of modern India should not be only the great dead. How could a modern India be living whose builders were not living men—you and I ?